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Chairperson
Monterey County Grand Jury
P.O. Box 1819
Salinas, CA
93902

March 14, 2000

Dear Sir,

This is the required response to the section of the 1999 Monterey County Grand Jury Report entitled "Methamphetamine." As the Chief of Police in Pacific Grove, I was asked to prepare this response on behalf of the City of Pacific Grove. We are required to respond to Findings 1 through 5, and Recommendations I through 7. Here is my response.

Finding 1, "A significant danger from waste by-products, related to both the manufacture and usage of methamphetamine, places the population-at-large in an at-risk situation.

Major meth-makers frequently change the locations of their manufacturing operations making their discovery difficult for law enforcement."

Response: Waste by-products created by methamphetamine production can be hazardous, particularly in close proximity to the location where the by-products are dumped. Detection can be difficult.

Finding 2, "Monterey County is the unwitting host to large numbers of individuals involved in the clandestine manufacturing of meth. The profit incentive encourages many individuals to engage in the criminal practice of making meth."

Response: There may be large numbers of people making methamphetamine in Monterey County. The exact number is largely unknown. The profit factor is generally the most significant in any illicit drug production and sales operation.

Finding 3, "The prevalence of meth-related criminal activities places the population-at-large at increased risk of such crimes as burglary, robbery, and assault."

Response: All drug-related criminal activity has the potential to increase the criminal risk to the public at large. I am not familiar with any Monterey County studies or data that suggests the current correlation between methamphetamine and crime in this county.

Finding 4, "Monterey County is experiencing an increasing incidence of meth-usage and addiction among the population-at-large, especially among youths. Meth manufacturers have developed a multi-level (pyramid) sales scheme."

Response: To the best of my knowledge, methamphetamine usage appears to be on the rise among all user groups. Different manufacturers have been known to employ various sales schemes.

Finding 5, “The seizure of assets, including real property of individuals involved in meth-making, is often not being exercised by Monterey County law enforcement.” Response: If real property involved in meth making is not being seized, I surmise this is possibly because much of such manufacturing is done without the knowledge of the property owner, or because tainted property due to toxic dumping has left the property's value in question. I don't believe apathy is the key factor as to why real property is not being seized by Monterey County law enforcement, if this is the inference of this finding.

Recommendation 1, “Law enforcement agencies approach the methamphetamine problem as a distinct entity not related to other drug enforcement activities.” Response: I don't believe this is a sound recommendation. Drug enforcement efforts are best handled as coordinated activities, so as to prevent unnecessary duplication of effort and potential conflicts between disparate law enforcement groups. Some such confusion already exists due to overlapping jurisdictional boundaries between state, local, and federal agencies. This problem would certainly be exacerbated if the thrust of this recommendation were to create a "standalone" law enforcement process for addressing methamphetamine issues independently. This is a bad idea.

Recommendation 2, “Law enforcement agencies be required to submit information concerning all arrests relating to methamphetamine to the press in the form of press releases rather than simply indicating such incidents in the daily activities logs.” Response: I am not aware that this is a problem. We currently have a policy that requires separate news releases on all felony arrests, which would include methamphetamine-related arrests. I believe most law enforcement agencies have similar policies regarding felonies. Instead of blanket mandates to all law enforcement agencies on an issue of narrow applicability, I suggest the news agencies making this request work the issue out with the particular agency in question. Frankly, I fail to see the importance of this recommendation in the battle against methamphetamine usage in this county. The information sought currently exists, whether on a daily log or an official press release. Efficient reporters generally check both.

Recommendation 3, “Law enforcement agencies develop a coordinated communications plan so that methamphetamine information can be effectively shared by all agencies.” This seems a duplication of existing information and networking resources already present within the County of Monterey. Perhaps we need to examine whether or not our current methods of information sharing need improving before creating new methods. We certainly don't need a separate "stand alone" information database dealing solely with methamphetamine issues.

Recommendation 4, “The Monterey County Board of Supervisors seek the means for funding special methamphetamine-abatement personnel and programs.” Response: If the Board of Supervisors sees the need to do this, they should do this. Methamphetamine abatement is of little direct concern to the City of Pacific Grove at the present time. Obviously, this could change over time.

Recommendation 5, “The Board of Supervisors seek the means of funding environmental clean-up of legally seized, methamphetamine-related properties, and execute the resale of such properties as a means of funding increased anti-methamphetamine activities.”

Response: Whenever legal, logical, and cost-effective, this should occur. Does anyone disagree with this position? Is this not currently occurring?

Recommendation 6, “The Board of Supervisors and City Councils provide funding for the purchase of a meth-trained canine.” Response: I would recommend to my City Council that they not participate financially in such an action, as this is primarily a County concern. Other cities could certainly participate in such a program if they so desired. I'm sure this would be a city by city determination as to participation.

Recommendation 7, “The Board of Supervisors and City Councils provide funding for the training and placement of more meth-qualified deputies in the field.” Response: I would like clarification as to ,what "meth-qualified deputies" means. If this means deputies qualified to handle and dismantle meth labs, I believe existing resources are sufficient to handle those tasks. If this means training deputies to detect meth labs, meth users, or meth distributors, this might not be a significant training expense. If this means cities should pay for additional deputies to work meth lab issues, I would recommend against such. financing to my City Council. Financing deputy positions has always been, and should remain, a County expense.

The vast majority of meth lab incidents occur in the County jurisdiction, particularly in the more rural areas. Obviously, some activity takes place in regular homes in cities, hotel bathrooms, and the funks of vehicles, so cities cannot ignore this issue, and I don't believe they have.

Summary: It seems the thrust of these recommendations is to encourage County cities to pay for what should be County personnel, programs, and canines. I would submit that the County already has the wherewithal to pay for such personnel and resources if they choose to do so. The Monterey County Sheriff's Department will receive over ten million dollars this year alone from their distribution of Proposition 172 funds. This amounts to over ten times the Proposition 172 funds distributed this year to all the other local police agencies in Monterey County **combined**. If the Sheriff and his bosses, the Board of Supervisors, feel methamphetamine activity in this county constitute an out of control epidemic, they should redistribute their allocation of Proposition 172 money to finance the war on methamphetamine.

I have other suggestions regarding the information contained in the Grand Jury report on methamphetamine. Feel free to contact me if you would like to hear those comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Miller". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Scott" and last name "Miller" clearly distinguishable.

Scott Miller
Chief of Police
Pacific Grove Police Department